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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

January 26, 1962

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Dear Mr. Bell:

Enclosed are seven copies of a draft executive order transferring administration of the Northern Mariana Islands of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands from the Secretary of the Navy to the Secretary of the Interior. We recommend that the draft executive order be signed, if possible before May 31, 1962, the opening date of the Trusteeship Council. The effective date of the order, however, is July 1, 1962.

The administration of the Trust Territory was transferred from the Secretary of the Navy to civilian administration under the Secretary of the Interior by Executive Order No. 10265 of June 29, 1951. Subsequently, the islands of the Northern Marianas, except for the island of Rota, were returned to Navy jurisdiction by Executive Order No. 10408 of November 10, 1952, as amended by Executive Order No. 10470 of July 17, 1953.

The matter of divided administrative responsibility has been kept under study by both Departments and it has now been determined that the Northern Marianas should be returned to Interior. In this connection, we should point out that the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations, which annually reviews our administration of the Trust Territory, has been critical of the "split" administration. During the session of June 1961, after appropriate clearances had been obtained by the State Department, the Trusteeship Council was advised by the High Commissioner that "this matter has been receiving most careful attention at the highest level of our Government and I can now further say that the Departments concerned are agreed in principle that the administration of the Territory should be unified. The detailed steps for bringing about this unified administration are now in process of being worked out."

The Departments of the Navy and Interior are working out the details of the transfer and have recommended July 1, 1962, as the most appropriate transfer date. As we mentioned before, it is hoped that the order can be promulgated before May 31, the scheduled opening date of the Trusteeship Council session.

We have submitted copies of the draft executive order to the Departments of the Navy and State on an informal basis. Both have advised that they have no objections to the order in its present form.

Upon the transfer of the Northern Mariana Islands to the jurisdiction of the Secretary of the Interior, we shall move the Trust Territory headquarters to Saipan as the provisional capital of the territory. Headquarters were initially established in Hawaii and, in 1954, were transferred to Guam as an interim move. The facilities now located on Saipan which are being made available without exchange of funds make the move of Trust Territory headquarters particularly advantageous at this time.

Your favorable consideration of the enclosed draft executive order will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

/s/

D. Otis Beasley

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Honorable David E. Bell  
Director, Bureau of the Budget